

ABSTRACT

DISSERTATION PROJECT: Persistence Factors of Women in Information Technology – A Multiple Case Study Analysis

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Women have historically been underrepresented in the field of information technology. The literature related to the underrepresentation of women in information technology has focused on developing strategies for attracting more females into the industry. Despite these efforts, the number of women in information technology has been declining. The factors that contribute to the career persistence of women in information technology were investigated. An exploratory multiple case study methodology was used with nine women who have been employed in the information technology field for a minimum of five years. The subjects underwent a series of two interviews that focused on the reasons why they thought they had been able to have sustained careers in information technology. A qualitative analysis of the interviews was conducted to determine the factors that the subjects identified as contributors to their career persistence. The interviews were also analyzed to discover whether women that have had sustained careers in information technology conceptualize their experiences from particular feminist perspectives.

The findings provided insights into the following factors that contribute to career persistence among women in information technology. These factors included how a woman

transitioned into her first information technology position, personal traits, effective career strategies, and effective coping strategies. While there will be individual differences, each subject presented that a combination of the stated factors directly contributed to her sustained career in information technology.

Women in information technology were found to conceptualize their experiences through a variety of feminist perspectives. The existential feminist perspective was used extensively as a rationale for how societal expectations shape peoples view of women in information technology. The Marxist/socialist feminist and radical feminist perspectives were utilized when describing the barriers against women in information technology. The liberal feminist and postmodern feminist perspectives served as a foundation for recommendations to increase the likelihood for women entering and staying in the field of information technology.